(c) by when, the project is likely to be completed; and

(d) the action taken to complete the said project within the scheduled time-frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA) : (a) The earthwork and bridges are in progress on Madurai-Manamadurai section. The tenders for earthwork and bridges on Manamadurai- Mandapam section have been processed.

(b) The likely expenditure on the project upto March 2003 is Rs. 9.17 crore and an outlay of Rs. 10 crore has been provided during 2003-2004.

(c) and (d) The work on Madurai-Manamadurai section is targeted for completion by June 2004 and Manamadurai-Rameswaram by December 2005. The work is being expedited to complete as per the time schedule.

Stoppage of Shatabdi Express at Chandigarh

4475. SHRI C. PERUMAL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the main passenger traffic in Shatabdi Express trains is being dealt with at Chandigarh Railway Station;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the stoppage timings of the above trains are reduced from 22 minutes to 8 minutes only which is causing hardship to the passengers; and

(c) if answer to (a) and (b) is affirmative, what are the detailed reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA) : (a) Yes, Sir. Chandigarh Railway Station is dealing with the major passenger traffic on Shatabdi train Nos. 2005/2006; 2011/2012 and 2037/2038 between New Delhi and Chandigarh.

(b) and (c) The stoppage time of Shatabdi Express was curtailed to 8 minutes to reduce the running time and as the passengers travelling by Shatabdi Express trains generally do not travel with heavy luggage, the duration of stoppage is considered sufficient for entraining/detraining of passengers.

Free Travel in Railways

4476. DR. P.C. ALEXANDER : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the categories and the number of people under each category who are allowed free travel on Railways;